

Wood Energy Task Group meeting – 27th November 2007
The Greenwood Centre, Ironbridge
2:00 till 4:30

Present

John Davis (JD) – Woodland Improvement/ FTA
Nicky Davis / Jennifer Horne – Groundwork
Tim Dixon – Natural England
Andy Grundy (AG) – Heartwoods (chair)
Bill Heslegrave (BH) – Forestry Commission
Mike Kelly (MK) – Shropshire Hills AONB
Chris Maskell (CM) – GOWM
Nick Monether (NM) – Greenfields Consulting
Simon West (SW) – Advantage WM
Judy Walker (JW) - SWA

Apologies

Mike Bradbury, Diane Roberts, Sara Roberts, Charlotte Reeves, Gordon Dwyer, Paul Cobbing, Andy Hall, Rebecca Roberts.

Welcome, introductions

AG welcomed new attendees and invited introductions.

1. Issues arising from last meeting

No comment on wood energy draft.

AG pointed out that the planning applications for biomass power plants in Bishops Castle and Tenbury Wells have been submitted and that HW is commenting on the BC plant and invited comment from the group to build in to the response.

After a round table discussion the following points to be highlighted;

- Point out contradictions between the Wood Fuel Strategy and ROC applicability (why are Energy crops worth more than forestry)
- JD commented on success of the EU tariff system and how ROCs cause confusion and do not appear to be working.
- NM – these plants are a distraction from small heat-only production.

2. England Wood Fuel Challenge - Wyre Woodfuel Pathfinder

BH outlined the successful bid to FCE as circulated for comment after the last meeting. Funding of £25k p.a. for 07/08 and 08/09 secured after a bid for £33750 for 07/08. This had the condition of incorporating (but not funding) Biometrics and Technical Development work.

AG (who will run the project on 2dpw) outlined the practical content of the project and signposted item 7 to discuss the training of woodfuel 'champions'. The group discussed how the Biom and Tech Dev work could inform and add value to the pathfinder.

TD offered upto £10k funding from NE to fund the 'gap' between the bid and award for 07/08. This had previously been discussed at a Wyre technical working group meeting.

ACTION - AG to forward WWP document and financial info on SWA as required to draw down the funds.

JW outlined how the WWP needed steering and that currently HW is directed by the SWA board plus BH. Following the bid to RDPE a HW board may be resurrected and this is an opportunity to put together a steering group for now that can step up to board status when or if required.

The group then discussed the need for private sector (and now NE) representation on this group, and that there should be an offer of expenses, and possibly time, payments to facilitate this. No offers were forthcoming from the group and the following individuals were suggested;

Private Sector – Duncan Webster (Abbey Forestry), Judith Webb (WFF chair), Bede Howell.

NE – Mark July, Charlotte Reeves.

Third – Gordon Dwyer (Bewdley Development Trust)

ACTION – AG to approach these individuals and request more suggestions if required.

JD then described the successful Gloucestershire woodfuels bid, centred around building up stocks of seasoning woodfuel prior to chipping, for the supply of low MC chip to 'community scale' installations. It was agreed that the 2 woodfuel projects are very complimentary and that regular contact should be kept up.

3. Discussion of Wyre projects

AG/ TD then described how other elements of the GWW project will compliment the WWP, including the proposals for a number of installations in the Bewdley area, including a Biomass Power plant.

4. Sub – regional projects

Short summaries of the Staffs/ Shrops renewables project and the AONBs Wood for Heat were presented by AG.

SSRP (Seeking AWM funding)– This seeks to build on the cluster of renewable technology manufacturers and installations in the 2 counties, to increase uptake of renewables through business networks and awareness raising, whilst increasing the capacity within the supply chain for biomass.

WM AONBs 'Wood for Heat' (Sustainable Development Fund) – This project seeks to increase on site utilisation of woodfuel resources in rural properties in the AONBs. This will be primarily delivered through advisor visits and those advisors will be trained as the woodfuel champions (item 7). There is also underspend in the MH and SH AONBs that can pump prime through training delivery.

BH warned against WfH duplicity with WWP and RDPE work.

SW responded that at this stage its not a problem as they are in development and this can be managed.

TD made the point that using the AONB under spend will increase the likelihood of the AONBs receiving SDF resources next year.

5. New Agenda item – RDPE and Forestry

BH updated the group on the development of an RDPE project focussing on woodfuel.

Main points;

- Greater consultation and engagements with the private sector required.
- Martin Glynn has been employed to put the bid together.
- A background paper to AWM is now being followed by a 'concept' paper that will lead to a 2 way process developing the final bid.
- Linked heavily to woodfuel supply chain
- Looking at around £1.6m over 6 years weighted.
- WETG and WFITG are main routes of consultation with industry.

SW confirmed that RDPE needs cash match funding (may be some scope for in-kind).

JD asked to ensure that ConFor are consulted, the new contact is Graham Taylor at Prior and Rickett

Training element of RDPE

CLA lead on this element and SW encouraged this element to ensure it is making links across the region, particularly Bioenergy WM who are getting funding through 'science city' for more of the same with training elements.

7. Training

AG described the training element of WWP as an updated and greater depth course than offered by Ignite. It will be delivered by BEC/ Technical Development and is being led by Stephanie Roux. JD said that the Gloucs Woodfuels project will include training elements in 08/09. He also outlined the lack of capacity in motor manual harvesting and the inability of mechanised contractors to take on sites with under 1000m³.

BH said the first woodfuel training will be delivered to the Woodland officers of the region in early January.

JD agreed that things have moved on and that Ignite 'advanced' being developed by Black and Veitch through the Centre for Sustainable Energy.

TD would like to see training in evaluating the 'wider' benefits of forestry- Biodiversity etc.

JD would like training on new 'habitats directive' included.

8. Round Table update

TD said that as part of the Back to Orange project they are calculating the total area of the Wyre that needs to be in coppice management to fulfil biodiversity objectives, stable populations of threatened species etc. Work to be complete by April.

JD – Gloucs Woodfuels – is a supply co-operative based on the Plunkett model. They supply <30% MC chip. The project is looking at seasoning in the wood for low MC chip with GW acting as 'buyer of last resort'. This allows the whole process to be gone through and costs properly established. It will also look at machinery rings to increase mechanisation of the harvesting sector and development of 'tree stations'